cases are even extinct. Thus, *Cyanorhamphus ulietanus* (Gm.) appears to be known by only one specimen in the British and one (the type) in the Vienna Museum, and has never been heard of since the time of Latham; *C. erythronotus* (Gm.) was seen again and last in four or five specimens only by Lieutenant Marolles during a stay at Tahiti of twenty months ending in 1844 (Finsch, 'Papageien,' ii. 268); *Coriphilus taitianus* (Gm.) is said by Mr. Garrett, a former collector of the Godeffroy Museum, to have become extinct in the islands of Huaheine, Raiatea, and Tahea (Cat. Mus. Godeffr. 1874, v. p. xvii), but it still occurs on many other islands; neither has anything been heard of *Turdus ulietensis*, Gm., since Forster's time, nor of *Rallus tahitiensis*, Gm. But an excellent law of the French, forbidding the destruction of birds in the islands over which they have authority, may perhaps have enabled these species to survive up to the present.

For a list of the birds of the Gilbert Islands, see Dr. Finsch's letter in 'The Ibis,' 1880, pp. 433, 434, to which only *Gallus bankiva*, var. ?, can be added.

Since this paper was commenced, we have annexed the neighbouring Ellice atolls. The only notes on the birds of these islands with which I am acquainted are to be found in a short paper by Dr. R. B. Sharpe in P. Z. S. 1878, pp. 271–273, with a communication adjoined from Mr. Whitmee. The following eight species are enumerated:—*Ardea sacra*, Gm.; *Anous cæruleus* (F. D. Bennett); *Anous stolidus* (Linn.); *Anous leucocapillus*, Gld.; *Sterna anæstheta* (Scop.); *Gygis candida* (Gm.); *Fregata aquila* (Linn.); and a *Carpophaga*, which was believed by the collector, Herr Fritz Hansen, to be *C. pacifica*. It is, perhaps, more likely to be *C. oceanica*, Lesson.

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## XVIII.—*On the Bird indicated by the Greek* Ἀλκυών.

By H. B. Tristram, D.D., F.R.S.

A short time ago my friend Dr. W. Greenwell, F.R.S., showed me an archaic Greek coin which bore on its obverse the figure of a cow with a bird on its back. He asked me what bird I thought was represented there. I replied without hesitation, "A Tern." He then said he was equally certain that it was a Tern. The coin is one of the only two similar coins known, of Dicæa, on the Thracian coast, a colony of Eretria in Eubœa. But coins with the same symbols from Eretria are well known. The cow is probably Io; who is connected with Eubœa, where she is said to have brought forth Epaphus; and who was worshipped as a moon-goddess at Eretria. The Tern would fitly accompany Io, as her wanderings were chiefly by sea. But the sacred bird of Eretria was ἡ ἁλκυὼν, and no other bird than the Tern has ever been found on any Eubœan coin. Now all modern naturalists, from the earliest writers previous to Linnæus downwards, have identified ἁλκυὼν with the Kingfisher. But the identification is open to doubt. The fullest account of ἡ ἁλκυὼν is that given by Aristotle, who (Hist. Anim. v. 8) relates the tale of the 'Halcyon days,' referring to the poet Simonides; and states that this bird breeds in midwinter, during 14 days given it by Jupiter at the time of the setting of the Pleiades. He adds that in the Sicilian seas the ἁλκυὼν is almost always to be seen, but not so in Greece; and he implies that it makes a floating nest on the sea. Again (*op. cit.* viii. 5), he says the *Halcyon* family (ἁλκυόνων γένος) are water-birds; that there are two species, one which has a note and breeds among the reeds, the other larger and without a song, and that both have the back κυανοῦν; and he puts the Divers and Gulls next the *Halcyon*. But again Aristotle (*op. cit.* ix. 15) describes the Halcyon as not much larger than a Sparrow (στρουθὸς), and its colour κυανοῦς, χλωρὸς, and reddish; all being mingled. Afterwards he describes the nest as a hollow tube, and probably made of the bones of fishes.

Ælian, in his 'Natura Animalium,' casts no further light on the question, merely expanding the myth of the Halcyon days in midwinter, and also minutely describing the manner in which the bird constructs its nest of spines on shore, and then carries it down to the sea and launches it. Pliny does but repeat Aristotle's story. I cannot find any other passages in classical authors which will aid in the identification.

It seems probable that Aristotle, *op. cit.* ch. ix. 15, intended to describe our *Alcedo ispida,* but that he erroneously transferred to it the myth of the Halcyon days, which really belonged in popular belief to the Tern (*Sterna fluviatilis*). In all the other passages referred to, he seems to be speaking of the Tern, placing it next the Divers and Gulls (*αἴθυια* and *λάρος*). The specification which he gives of the colour is that the back is *κυάνεος, i. e.* sea-coloured, a term which is best rendered by "slaty grey," being applied elsewhere to clouds, human hair, and dark masses, never to blue. This exactly agrees with the colour of the back of *Sterna hirundo.* Aristotle adds that there are two species, a larger and a smaller, both of the same colour, and the smaller one breeding in rushes. This well corresponds with the two species most common in Greece, *S. fluviatilis* and *S. hybrida,* of which the latter and smaller species breeds in marshes, the former on the sea-shore. It is true that there are two Kingfishers common in Greece, but evidently the second species, *Ceryle rudis,* was not considered by Aristotle, its coloration being entirely different from the other. My concluding inference is that the poetic tales of the Halycon must be attached to the graceful Sea-Swallow, and not to the Kingfisher of our river-banks.

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## XIX.—*On the Species of* Zosterops *found in the Island of Java.* By Henry Seebohm, F.Z.S.

If the legends respecting the invasion of New Zealand and the Chatham Islands by the Australian White-eye, *Zosterops cærulescens,* be true, it must be admitted that the White-eyes have a genius for emigration. Wherever they are found they are extremely common, and there is abundant evidence in their geographical distribution to prove that many emigrations have taken place since the original differentiation of the ancestors of the genus. There are two species of this genus in Norfolk Island and two on Lord Howe Island; New Caledonia possesses two species, and Lifu (one of the Loyalty group) is inhabited by three. The island of Java is inhabited by no fewer than six species of *Zosterops.*